

Dear members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee,

I am writing to express my support for House Bill 5262, an act revising certain absentee voting eligibility statutes.

While we are very lucky in the state of Connecticut to have not been hit as severely as other states by COVID-19 and we have one of the highest rates of vaccinated residents, thanks heavily in part to Governor Lamont's leadership and his listening to health experts, we still have residents who are medically vulnerable to the virus. Even while fully vaccinated people who are battling cancer, are taking immunosuppressant medication, have a lung or heart illness, or had an organ or bone marrow transplant cannot fight off COVID-19 as well as the average person due to their immune system not working at 100%. A recent study done by the British Medical Journal found people with Down's Syndrome even when fully vaccinated were 12 times more likely to die from COVID-19 compared to the general population.

None of these people asked for these disabilities and I would say it's incredibly unfair to ask them to potentially risk their lives to be part of the democratic process and some might argue it's a violation of the Americans With Disabilities Act.

Our state has already done statewide absentee ballot voting for two election cycles without any major issues and it has proven to be very popular with state residents and increased voter turnout, which is always a good thing for democracy no matter your political affiliation.

It's the least our state can do for our most vulnerable residents who want to have their say in elections.

Thank you for your time,

Leanne Harpin